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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Monday, Mar. 30, 2020

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## **Governor Pritzker and Mayor Lightfoot Announce Plans For 3,000-Bed Alternate Care Setting at McCormick Place to Treat COVID-19 Patients**

*Additional Capacity Created to Prepare for Expected Surge in  
Hospitalizations of COVID-19 Patients*

**Chicago** – Governor JB Pritzker, Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot, the US Army Corps of Engineers and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) today announced plans to temporarily convert part of the McCormick Place Convention Center into an Alternate Care Facility (ACF) for COVID-19 patients with mild symptoms who don't require intensive care. The additional capacity at McCormick Place will build on efforts taken by the State and City to aid in the response to COVID-19 related cases by relieving pressure on the hospital system by freeing up beds for more patients with severe COVID-19 cases in anticipation of the surge in positive COVID-19 diagnoses to come.

“Based on science, data, and the guidance of health experts, our approach to fighting this virus is two-pronged: suppress the spread and increase hospital capacity to meet the need,” **said Gov. JB Pritzker**. “A critical component of increasing our capacity is identifying and building out additional facilities across the state to support our existing hospitals and healthcare system. In partnership with the City of Chicago and the U.S. Army Corps we are planning to increase capacity, so we're prepared to treat patients and save lives.”

The State and City are working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and FEMA to build the temporary healthcare setting at McCormick Place to serve patients with low to mild acuity, but may still need medical attention prior to returning to their place of residence. Over the next several weeks, the McCormick Place campus will be transformed into an alternative medical facility treating those with COVID-19. This buildout will take place in phases, with up to 500 beds expected to be assembled by the end of this week.

“Given the anticipated needs of Chicago's healthcare system in the coming weeks, the City is proud to partner with Governor Pritzker and state officials to establish surge capacity facilities to relieve the hospital system so it can focus on acute care patients,” **said Mayor Lightfoot**. “Chicago is committed to providing our residents and healthcare workers with the resources they need in the face of the rapidly

escalating COVID-19 crisis. The conversion of McCormick Place marks another step forward in our plan to provide safe, secure sites so that Chicagoans can return to health. We're all in this together."

Through a multi-phased approach, teams will be working around the clock to complete the conversion of several spaces on the McCormick Place Campus. Between three different locations the facility will have capacity to care for up to 3,000 patients and will be made fully operational in a series of phases in order to accommodate increased demand for care as quickly as possible.

To expedite construction, Governor Pritzker has also activated 30 Airmen from the Illinois National Guard to assist with the general labor associated with the project. The buildout of the facility will be supported by \$15 million in federal funding from FEMA to support the Army Corps' construction plan.

"The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is honored to be a part of this FEMA, State, County and City response to COVID-19 and to support the U.S. Army's efforts and response throughout this crisis," **said Col. Aaron Reisinger, commander and district engineer for the Corps' Chicago District.**

State and City officials are anticipating a surge in hospitalizations related to COVID-19 in the coming weeks based on the newest data and trends seen in other large cities. In Illinois and across the country, cases of COVID-19 continue to rise, placing additional stress on local healthcare facilities. The space at McCormick will transition back into its original use when additional medical care facilities are no longer needed.

"This is an unprecedented global public health emergency. We are grateful for the opportunity to work with the City of Chicago and State of Illinois in providing a coordinated response to this crisis" **said Larita Clark, CEO of MPEA**, which runs McCormick Place. "Our hope is that using McCormick Place as a temporary, alternative care site will create more capacity to support our healthcare system."

The ACF will be overseen by a team of veteran hospital administrators. The State, City and federal partners will collaborate to staff the facility with qualified medical professionals. The Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) has requested additional medical staffing through Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), is working with partners at existing medical centers that have additional staff capacity and is requesting volunteers with medical experience. If you're a healthcare worker looking to serve, please sign up at [www.illinoishelps.net](http://www.illinoishelps.net) or [Chicago.gov/coronavirus](http://Chicago.gov/coronavirus).

"The federal government—in close coordination with our state and city partners—is taking aggressive and proactive steps to respond to this unprecedented pandemic," **said FEMA Region V Administrator James K. Joseph.** "This joint effort is meant to keep us ahead of a potential surge in coronavirus cases that could stress the city's healthcare system, ensuring residents are getting the medical treatment they need, when they need it."

Additionally, the State and City are working to create temporary bed capacity at MetroSouth Hospital in Blue Island and the State is working to temporarily create COVID-19 bed capacity at Advocate Sherman Hospital in Elgin.

For all personal protective equipment (PPE) donations, email [PPE.donations@illinois.gov](mailto:PPE.donations@illinois.gov). For health questions about COVID-19, call the hotline at 1-800-889-3931 or email [dph.sick@illinois.gov](mailto:dph.sick@illinois.gov).

For more information and Chicago specific updates on COVID-19, text COVID19 to 78015, email [coronavirus@chicago.gov](mailto:coronavirus@chicago.gov) or visit [Chicago.gov/coronavirus](http://Chicago.gov/coronavirus).

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